

**Amendments to the Claims**

This list of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (original): A system for selecting a fabric master comprising: a candidate master having a memory element; said memory element storing a path identifier comprising an EUI and an ownership indicia; a first delay indicia associated with said candidate master representing an announce delay; and a second delay indicia associated with said candidate master representing an announce duration.

Claim 2 (currently amended): A method for selecting a fabric master by a candidate master, said candidate master comprising a memory element storing an EUI and a NEUI, said method comprising: waiting for at least a first delay indicia representing an announce delay; performing a first test of an ownership indicia; performing a second test using said candidate master's EUI against said candidate master's NEUI; and sending an announce packet if results of first test indicates that said candidate master has not yet surrendered mastership and if results of said second test indicates that said candidate master's has not received an announcement from a second candidate master with a higher priority.

Claim 3 (original): A method of selecting a fabric master according to claim 2 further comprising: waiting for at least a second delay indicia representing an announce

duration; performing a third test using said candidate master's EUI against said candidate master's NEUI; and sending an own packet if said third test indicates that said candidate master's has not received an announcement from a second candidate master with a higher priority.

Claim 4 (currently amended): A method of selecting a fabric master by a ~~candidate master~~ switch within said fabric, said switch comprising an ownership indicia and a memory element storing an EUI, said method comprising: receiving a first packet, known as an announce packet from a candidate master, said packet having a first field representing an EUI; performing a test of said ownership indicia; and if said test indicates that said fabric is not owned, comparing said switch's candidate master's EUI with said announce packet's EUI; updating ~~candidate master's~~ said switch's EUI with announce packet's EUI and propagating said announce packet in the event of predetermined conditions, otherwise discarding said announce packet, propagating said announce packet.

Claim 5 (currently amended): A method of claim 4 wherein said memory element in said switch further comprises a bit count, said announce packet further comprises a second field representing a bit count and said predetermined conditions comprise include said switch's EUI being equal to said announce packet's EUI and comparing said switch's candidate master's bit count being less than with said announced packet's bit count.

Claim 6 (currently amended): A method of claim 4 wherein said memory element in said switch further comprises a turn

pool, said announce packet further comprises a second field representing a turn pool, and said predetermined conditions comprise include said switch's EUI being equal to said announce packet's EUI and comparing said switch's candidate master's turn pool being greater than with said announced packet's turn pool.

Claim 7 (currently amended): A The method of claim 4 for selecting a fabric master by a candidate master further comprising: receiving a second packet, known as an own packet, said own packet comprising a field representing an EUI; comparing candidate master's said switch's EUI with said own packet's EUI; updating candidate master's said switch's EUI with own packet's EUI and propagating said own packet in the event of second predetermined conditions, otherwise discarding said own packet; propagating said own paeket.

Claim 8 (original): A method of claim 4 7 wherein said memory element in said switch further comprises a bit count, said own packet further comprises a second field representing a bit count and said second predetermined conditions comprise include said switch's EUI being equal to said own packet's EUI and comparing said switch's candidate master's bit count being less than with said announced own packet's bit count.

Claim 9 (original): A method of claim 4 7 wherein said memory element in said switch further comprises a turn pool, said own packet further comprises a second field representing a turn pool, and said second predetermined conditions comprise include said switch's EUI being equal

to said own packet's EUI and comparing said switch's  
candidate master's turn pool being greater than with said  
announced own packet's turn pool.

Claim 10 (new): The method of claim 2 wherein said first test comprises testing the state of said ownership indicia such that if said indicia is not asserted, said master candidate has not surrendered mastership.

Claim 11 (new): The method of claim 2 wherein said second test comprises comparing said candidate master's EUI against said candidate master's NEUI such that if said NEUI has higher priority than said EUI, said master candidate has not received an announcement from a second candidate master with a higher priority.

Claim 12 (new): The method of claim 3 wherein said third test comprises comparing said candidate master's EUI against said candidate master's NEUI such that if said EUI is equal to said NEUI, said master candidate has not received an announcement from a second candidate master with a higher priority.

Claim 13 (new): The method of claim 4 wherein said predetermined conditions comprise said announce packet's EUI having a higher priority than said switch's EUI.

Claim 14 (new): The method of claim 7 wherein said second predetermined conditions comprise said own packet's EUI having a higher priority than said switch's EUI.

Claim 15 (new): The system of claim 1, wherein said candidate master further comprises: a second memory element storing a NEUI; a transmitter adapted to send announce packets in response to a first predetermined condition and to send own packets in response to a second predetermined condition.

Claim 16 (new): The system of claim 15, wherein said first condition comprises said ownership indicia indicating said fabric is not owned and said NEUI having higher priority than said EUI.

Claim 17 (new): The system of claim 15, wherein second condition comprises said EUI being equal to said NEUI.